DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 094 070 UD 014 419

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TITLE Day Care as an Instrument of Political and Social Control.
PUB DATE 14 Apr 74
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association (San Francisco, California, April 14, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Child Care; *Day Care Programs; Federal Programs; *Institutional Role; Policy Formation; Political Issues; Poverty Programs; Professional Services; *Program Development; *Public Policy; Social Problems; Social Services; *Social Values; Social Work; Welfare Recipients

ABSTRACT

Day care is an entity unto itself whose values and goals have neigher been proclaimed nor supported. Unless it examines and declares its theoretical base reflecting planning in response to what it views as its purpose and mission, it will continue to be treated as a marginal, residual institution and user capriciously as a political and social instrument. Day care's unavowed goals have been almost exclusively work oriented, spiked with programmatic doses of education and social work geared toward the prevention of family breakdown--toward the family deemed inadequate socially or economically--the dysfunctioning family. Even its original avowed goal--prevention of juvenile delinquency--has consistently been vulnerable to the whims of governmental legislation and social attitudes. Day care is a prime example of organizational adaptation to precarious values. In the 1960's, as day care itself began the push for professionalization and viable educational goals, and with the development of Head Start programs as a way of operationalizing both community control and self-determination, the long dormant concept of viewing day care as a social service emerged. The reconceptualization of day care as a social service resource not limited to dysfunctioning families falls within the purview of preventive models of intervention. (Author/JM)

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DAY CARE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTROL

For Presentation at Panel Meeting, April 14, 1974

American Orthopsychiatric Association

San Francisco, California

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DAY CARE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTROL

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Day Care from its inception has been viewed politically as a way of regulating the poor, (working and unemployed), women, children and not incidentally, the men in our society. It has been a repository of constantly changing and conflicting social values centered primarily on two of society's most revered institutions, "motherhood" and the education of the very young child.

In less than three decades, day care has grown from a relatively insignificant effort to a major social program. President Nixon reflected some of the nation's conflicts about day care when he emotionally vetoed a comprehensive child care bill stressing his moralistic distaste for "communal approaches" to child rearing. "Good public policy", he said, "requires that we enhance rather than diminish both parental authority and parental involvement with children - particularly in those decisive early years when social attitudes and a conscience are formed, and religious and moral principles are first inculcated." [1] Paradoxically, his concern for the family's early childhood responsibility received short shrift in the welfare bill he did endorse. This bill, HRI, authorized $750 million (contrasted to $2 billion yearly for the vetoed bill) for free day care of children whose parents earn less than $4800 a year. It was designed primarily to encourage so-called "welfare mothers" to obtain jobs by providing day care services for their children. [2]

Here the predominant protestant ethic of work and individualism

juxtaposed with the political reality of reducing welfare costs, highlights some of the ideological conflicts characteristic of the day care movement. These conflicts provoke many issues and questions, all of which only begin to tap the complexity of day care.....Is day care an institution designed to serve the economic (rising welfare costs) and social (working mother) needs of the nation; is it a service to strengthen families, to prevent delinquency and family breakdown; is it really "good" for children?

In view of the fact that more than 11 million mothers nationwide, many with young children, are presently employed, some of these questions are academic. The last question, is it "good" for children is a concern, a value about which both professional and lay persons are constantly struggling, but one which cannot be ignored. Its investigations and justification have assumed even more importance with national reports of increased early childhood enrollments in educational programs; the influence of the women's liberation movement on the day care structure, and the soaring costs of day care. [3]

What is day care? What are its goals? Whose needs is it serving? Is it an instrument, a means towards an end or is it an entity in and of itself, a viable institution?

The use of the concept day care is difficult to define, a difficulty reflective of its heritage. The meaning is relative to the time, culture, political climate and prevalent concepts of child rearing and development. Regardless of the form day care assumes (family day care, groupcare in nurseries, nursery schools, and pre-kindergarten; special

group programs such as Head Start, those for migrant and handicapped children) the underlying theme is the care of the child outside of his home. (Homemaker service which is sometimes included, is the exception).[4] On a conceptual level, then, day care can be defined as "all those arrangements whereby individuals or groups, other than the parents or guardians of children and infants residing in their own or foster homes, regularly take charge of and are responsible for non-related children during periods of time when parents or guardians are not present. Elementary schools are excluded except when care is provided during other than school hours." [5] The Board of Health, licensing body for all New York City day care services, qualifies this definition by stressing that compensation is not required and neither is a "stated educational purpose." [6] Expanding the concept, the Day Care Council of New York, an influential day care standard setting agency, describes day care as having an on-going education and health program which is designed to reflect parents' desires for their children and to supplement and fortify home values. It is seen as an extension, not a substitution for the home and family. [7] Implicit in these interpretations is the assumption that adults other than a child's parents can provide nurture and training equal to or better than those provided by the parent, and perform complementary or supplementary surrogate functions. Program planning and development, however, frequently reflecting this custodial and educational polarity, has often neglected to include the unique needs of children and families as its primary concern.

New York City was the birthplace of day care in the United States.

The Nursery for Children of the Poor was established in 1854 as a result of one woman's concern for those children left during the day while their immigrant mothers worked exhausting hours in domestic service or in factories. This first day care effort emphasized the need for charity, and philanthropic assistance for working mothers and the care it offered was primarily a protective, custodial function seeking to "prevent juvenile delinquency", to keep the family intact through supplemental child care services.[8,9]

The daytime care of children received its major impetus during the Civil War, World War I, The Great Depression and World War II, all periods when mothers left home to work. It was during the depression of the 1930's with the establishment of nursery schools financed by the WPA that day care demonstrated its largest expansion. The primary goal of federal action in 1933, however, was to give employment to needy teachers, nurses, nutritionists, clerical workers, cooks and janitors as part of work relief programs designed to counter unemployment.

In the process, the educational possibilities of day care began to be explored and legitimized. The WPA nursery school (here used interchangeably with day care center), although set up by the government to meet a welfare need, was identified primarily as an educational service and was frequently housed in school buildings. Federal funds were made available to state departments of education and local boards operated the centers. Philosophically, the program represented "the first recognition by the federal and state government that the education and guidance of young children from 2-5 years of age is a responsibility warranting the expenditure of public funds."[10]

As the forties approached and economic conditions improved, it seemed likely that the day care program would terminate. Implicit in the federal government's pattern of funding was the message that support of day care would be contingent upon an insufficient labor supply especially during wars and economic upheavals. Day care would be used as a means to an end determined by governmental fiat. Therefore with the advent of World War II and the Nation's need to again utilize women in the war effort, the Lanham Act was passed in 1941 releasing federal funds to the states on a fifty-fifty matching basis for the establishment and expansion of day care centers and nursery schools in defense areas. Nursery schools which from their inception were teacher-training and research focused were interestingly enough placed under the jurisdiction of the United States Office of Education while the Children's Bureau was given a similar assignment with respect to day care centers.

The attitude of the Children's Bureau towards its responsibility mandated under the Lanham Act can best be described as ambivalent. Some within the Bureau looked askance at what seemed to be a subtle sanction of encouraging mothers of pre-school children to work. They were joined by some social work leaders who were concerned that the federal stimulus to day care would be a destructive influence on the family and "contrary to basic Americal values." [11] Patriotically, the Children's Bureau pursued its tasks and developed comprehensive day care guidlines for communities.

When federal funds were withdrawn after World War II, there continued to be a struggle around funding patterns and to a lesser extent which institution-education or social welfare-would assume responsibility for day care services. In California, the state immediately assumed major

responsibility for funding and implementation under educational auspices.

New York City developed a unique pattern of public day care existing to this day. With the withdrawal of public funds and the refusal by the state legislature to allocate state funds, (in December 1947, Governor Dewey dismissed women demonstrators as "communists" for protesting the Horan Report which recommended termination of day care programs as beint too costly), the day care program was integrated into the city Welfare Department and the Division of Day Care was created. It was a natural alliance since the program had been dependent upon this department for space, funds and personnel. What added to its uniqueness was the deep involvement of private groups and individuals in both the operation and financing of the centers - a commitment that is reflected in the development of organizations such as the Day Care Council of New York, the Child Welfare League, located in New York City, and Boards, both traditional and community controlled.

The uneven pattern of funding, however, exists to this day. In the 1962 amendments to the Social Security Act, the funds were for the first time specifically earmarked for day care. In 1966, however, amendments to the Social Security Act deleted the earmarked portion of the day care service funds. The reasons given for the latter decision involved the recognition of States' rights to administer the funds and also the fact that alternative federal government resources were available through the Office of Economic Security.

During 1967, bills introduced in both the House and the Legislature were contemporary illustrations of day care receiving impetus and

emphasis for reasons other than a commitment to prividing direct service to children. Interest in the child was secondary to the goal of reducing public assistance roles. Some of the feelings about this legislation was voiced by mental health professionals who felt that the bills violated some very important day care principles: day care should be available to anyone who desires it, and the source of funding should not dictate who can or cannot use the service. Similarly, mothers should be free from social pressures to choose to work or not to work outside the home. Furthermore day care should be an entity in itself and not a means to some other end. The values of day care for itself should be proclaimed and supported. (Emphasis mine). [12]

It is the thesis of this paper that day care is an entity unto itself whose values and goals have neither been proclaimed nor supported. Unless it examines and declares its theoretical base reflecting planning in response to what it views as its purpose and mission, it will continue to be treated as a marginal, residual institution and used capriciously as a political and social instrument.

As we have seen from day care history, its unavowed goals have been almost exclusively work oriented, spiked with programmatic doses of education and social work geared towards the prevention of family breakdown -- towards the family deemed inadequate socially or economically -- the dysfunctioning family. Even its original avowed goal - "prevention of juvenile delinquency" - has consistently been vulnerable to the whims of governmental legislation and social attitudes. Day care is a prime example of "organizational adaptation to precarious values." [13]

The sociologist, Burton R. Clark, was interested in studying the processes by which organizations shape values. Since he felt these processes are difficult to identify, he proceeded to study organizations (e.g. adult education), that are linked to weakly established values.

The three criteria of precarious social values are their undefined qualities, the weak position of custodians in the social structure and their incompatibility or unacceptability to a "host" population. "Secure values, then are those that are clearly defined in behavior and strongly established in the minds of many. Such values literally take care of themselves. Precariously held values on the other hand, need deliberately intentioned agents, for they must be normatively defined or socially established, or both." [14]

This poses the general problem of how groups attempt to implement their values when they are precarious and how do they adapt. Clark then evolved the concept of "organizational marginality", where marginality stems from a program's low degree of legitimacy, non-acceptance from various groups and where the marginality of the program may thus be seen as the basic source of insecurity for the administrative units. This insecurity leads to the development of a program which becomes primarily a service enterprise characterized by service to the consumer, delivered ad hoc in an unplanned fashion. In the example of adult education, the original educational purpose is reduced to a service enterprise. Clark concludes that "we may expect this value adaptation, where purpose reduced to service will be pronounced, when organizations attached to a precarious value continue to find themselves without a dependable clientele or more

broadly with no specific outside social forces to sustain them -----." [15]

Day care in many ways, but maybe not all, is similar to adult education. Its values from the beginning tangentially espoused service to children, however these values never really became operational. Legislators could neither admit that day care was a service created to meet the needs of a specific group - the poor or the group designated by the government as needing day care service - nor could they admit that day care was meeting the child's needs. Firstly, the primary eligibility for day care service depends on the eligibility of the parent not the child. Secondly, in spite of the growth of the value of early childhood education and theories regarding the significance of social and educational stimulation for all levels of development in early childhood, there continues to remain a good deal of skepticism among professionals and lay people about the value of separating the child from his mother during the pre-school years. [16] More recently, however, there has been considerable pressure for early childhood education from minority groups who feel that learning to read at the age of three will prevent academic failure at the age of eight or nine. Anti-poverty legislation aimed at compensatory education for the pre-school economically "disadvantaged" youngster has only added to the conflict of whether day care is good for all children by bypassing all but poor children, thus perpetuating segregation and implying that our values should be applied differentially.

An additional factor to be considered in describing precarious values is the persistent conflicting role of women in society. In spite of the recent pressure by women's liberation groups highlighting the

regulatory aspects of child care legislation and the devaluing of self-determination, mothers choosing to work for other than economic reasons have not as yet significantly influenced legislation.

Day care goals have been precarious and in flux. Beginning as a social and political instrument, it cried throughout the years to develop some educational commitment and goals, particularly during the Great Depression and World War II. However, because of the additional precariousness of its funding (the "host" population was unaccepting of the value of separating mother and child and/or of women working except for national emergencies), and the alliance of day care with the Department of Welfare and Public Assistance, educational purpose became submerged in a day care bureaucracy thus weakening the position of the "custodians of the social structure."

Thus the goals and standards of day care have been undefined for decades. In addition it has maintained a marginal existence within the educational community. (Head Start is clearly an educational program), and the social work community (more about this later.) An organizational adaptation then developed that involved a transformation of values or a displacement of goals - the substitution of means for ends. [17]

The political use of day care as more recently exemplified by the welfare economy rendered the day care structure highly sensitive to public attitudes. Like adult education, day care was becoming more and more public service oriented and used as a way of regulating the poor. It was only with the appearance of Head Start in 1965, a service that dealt with a similar population as day care, that the latter again began to reconsider whether

it really did have something to offer. Here, too, however, there was the implication that pre-school education was only valuable for the "disadvantaged" because it would enable them as individuals to rise from poverty.

Clark points out that the difference between secure and precarious values is that the former because of their clear definitions and strong establishment obviously take care of themselves. Precarious values on the other hand need "deliberately intentioned agents" for they must be defined, socially established or both. [18]

Can social work be considered for the position of a"deliberately intentioned agent"? Do we have a role to play in day care? Did we ever have a role?

Social work shared with education the dual ancestry of the day care movement. Educators who were also <u>social reformers</u> became interested in early childhood education in the early nineteenth century when infant schools, the first group care facilities for very young children, were established in the slums of England. Social work's concern was protection of the child from the "environment", prevention of delinquency, and building of moral character. [19]

Social work entered the day care movement in the United States in the late eighteen hundreds when industrialization and urbanization exacerbated the social problems of the times. It's concerns were of a <u>social</u> nature - influencing social conditions and social institutions were of primary importance. Thus social work participated in the settlement houses, private family agencies and the twentieth century day-nursery movement. In the settlement house, where the commitment and goals appeared strongest,

there was the beginning of a collaboration between early childhood education and social work. However, in this setting the social work priority was social action and group work with emphasis on "Americanization" of immigrant children and prevention of delinquency through establishment of Play Schools.

In the voluntary family agencies, the development as demonstration projects, day nurseries for the children of all income working mothers was the thrust. The social work role was confined to establishing eligibility with apparently no provision, in spite of its pioneering approach, for future replication.

This pattern of social intervention at the environmental and structural level received its ultimate testimonial in the 1920's when prominent social worker-reformers such as Jane Addams of Hull House played significant roles in developing social legislation limiting women's and children's working hours.

Although day care in the 1920's could be considered primarily a custodial institution where social and emotional needs were largely ignored, the infusion in the 30's of Freud's psychoanalytic theory in day care was primarily through educational channels. The relationship between early childhood experiences and adequate mental health was subsequently translated by learning theorists like Piaget and Bruner into pre-school programs geared towards cognitive development. Although in the sixties in particular, many programs in their emphasis on cognitive development did not adequately reflect either by design or implementation the total child's needs, they did legitimize day care as an educational setting.

The impact of Freud on the field of mental health served in the long run to distance the professional from the institution of day care. The anguish over whether early separation was "good" for children, the emphasis in practice on individual change through social casework and therapy provided alternatives to social change as a practice and helped establish the clinical or treatment model as a primary mode of mental health intervention. For social work, struggling to become a sanctioned prestigious profession, the prospect of identification with a social welfare institution, with non-degreed personnel, where services would probably be confined to establishing eligibility, provided additional rationale for its alienation from day care.

In the sixties, as day care itself began the push for professionalization and viable ~~in~~ educational goals, and with the development of Head Start programs as a way of operationalizing both community control and self-determination, the long dormant concept of viewing "Day Care as a Social Service Resource" emerged. A position statement on day care was issued where the need for clarity of goals, for a sound theoretical base in order to be a viable institution etc., and its intrinsic value is proclaimed. [20] It is included here almost in its entirety because of its consistency with the author's philosophy and the values frequently associated with social work.

"Day Care should be a publicly regulated professionally supervised, diversely financed, differentially utilized social utility, available to any family desiring or needing and electing to use it.

It is not a tool to be used for the attainment of other ends of society. Women should be permitted to work outside of their homes without

feelings of conflict or of pressure. Women also should not be pressured to become employed and day care used as a part of the coercive scheme, such as those actions taken by Congress in 1967 relative to day care.

As a supplement to family care and training, day care is both an educational and a social service resource that can and should be used differentially. Its use is not limited to those families perceived to be inadequate or dysfunctioning. It also includes those families seeking enrichment of basically healthy situations. Structure of the service, qualifications of the staff, demography of the area serviced and needs of the children and families should determine the flexibility and differential use of day care.

There is no single model of service, either in family day care or in the day care center, for the attainment of the ultimate goal, the self-realization and social responsibility of the individual. The responsibility for programming directed toward this goal is interdisciplinary and rests with the professionals who are knowledgeable about the prerequisites for good mental health; early child development; family life and those forces operating to threaten or enhance it; early cognitive learning; preventative medical care and creative techniques that add to experimentation and new knowledge.

The day care professionals must assume leadership in projecting an image of day care as an entity. Differential use, innovation, and experimentation in developing programs will be facilitated by diversity in auspices and financing. Consistent with our conceptual heritage of "parens patrie" and "loco parentis", all day care programs regardless of auspices

or sources of fundings, should meet certain minimum standards of care and service. Such standards should be formulated by professionals having knowledge and expertise in the field, should be publicly administered and legally sanctioned. This may not result in uniformity of levels of care and service, but it would serve to protect clientele while upgrading programs and improving the image of day care."

The reconceptualization of day care as a social service resource not limited to dysfunctioning families falls within the purview of preventive models of intervention. That is, the more recently developed community mental health and public health models provide comprehensive approaches to mental health. Treatment is seen as part of prevention and services can be developed where a preventive priority (primary prevention) does not rule out early identification of emotional problems (secondary prevention) and the development of services to meet these needs (tertiary prevention).

In day care, then, it would appear that any model of intervention must be based on prevention and that the social work role (like that in other mental health-educational settings) must start from a "normal" base. This is particularly important to a population who have frequently felt to be victims of welfare systems, "treatment" attitudes (you are "sick" because you are using this service) and racism. Their initial distrust of any social worker and human service institution cannot be minimized. Within the framework of prevention and the concept of "strengthening the family", a consultation model might be developed. Using a systems approach and hopefully

transferrable clinical skills, intervention can be implemented through staff development. All staff would be involved in inservice training and supervision with individual and group consultation provided when indicated. The concept of "individualization" so often literally confined to working directly with a child is thus broadened to include individualization of the child, family, staff, center and community. Work with parents whether at intake, parent-teacher conferences, and groups again within the framework of prevention then includes an exchange in understanding of "normal" developmental crises in children, adults and families; of preparing and developing for roles as educational policy makers and as growing, searching, coping human beings.

In the author's own experience the move from delivering services to individual day care centers to providing consultative services to a local day care public agency responsible for over sixty centers with multiple programs, multiple directors, and a variety of children and families has provided an exciting challenge to the flexible use of theoretical approaches, preventive models and the comprehensive use of clinical skills.

Although the growing partnership within day care between education, mental health, families and community groups (professional and others) has certainly decreased its marginality, its precarious position as an institution due to continued existing funding and legislative patterns is still at issue. Day Care is still an Instrument of Social and Political Control.

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